



NEWS RELEASE

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HOMES IN PARTNERSHIP, INC. RECEIVES \$2.7 MILLION FROM UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE RURAL DEVELOPMENT

APOPKA, FL, September 17, 2004 — USDA Rural Development Acting Deputy Under Secretary Tim Ryan and Florida State Director Charles W. Clemons, Sr., joined future homeowners today at a check presentation ceremony in Apopka, Florida. Receiving a \$2,703,750 check from Rural Development on behalf of Homes in Partnership, Inc. (HIP) was Executive Director H. Lewis Kellom. HIP is a private non-profit organization offering affordable housing opportunities to low-income families in Orange, Lake, Sumter and Seminole counties. HIP currently builds over 100 homes per year in counties where there is tremendous need for decent, affordable housing. An important part of HIP's program is homeowner counseling. Housing counselors work directly with families interested in participating in self-help housing, and hold workshops in English and Spanish. With assistance from Rural Development, HIP has helped families throughout their service area reap the benefits of safe, sanitary and affordable housing.

"USDA Rural Development has a long history of providing assistance to improve housing opportunities in Florida, efforts which strengthen our communities," said Ryan. "President Bush has stressed the critical need of expanding homeownership in our Nation, and the important link it represents to personal economic prosperity. We congratulate Homes in Partnership on administering an excellent self-help housing program."

Housing is the cornerstone of economic security and is the ladder of opportunity for millions of families in the United States. Today's event marks a new beginning for 175 very low to low income residents of central Florida. These families will participate in "sweat equity" construction of their homes, helping make possible a clean, safe, and affordable place to live while building a bright, stable future for their children. "Having a safe, affordable place to call home is part of the American Dream, and something every Floridian should have the opportunity to achieve," said USDA Rural Development State Director Charles Clemons, Sr., during Friday's check ceremony.

The USDA Rural Development Mutual Self-Help Housing Program provides homeownership opportunities to low-income individuals in rural communities, exchanging the opportunity to work for a reduction in the mortgage amount, as well as direct home loans and subsidies based on income and family size. USDA Rural Development is committed to the future of rural communities and is the lead Federal entity for rural development needs and administers financial and technical assistance through Rural Housing Programs, Rural Business-Cooperative Programs and Rural Utilities Programs. Further information on USDA Rural Development can be obtained by contacting any USDA Service Center or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/fl>

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